



Montana  
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TO: Food Service Managers/Directors

FROM: School Nutrition Programs/Food Distribution

DATE: March 20, 2012

RE: USDA Foods Update

**USDA Press Release, March 15, 2012**

*In response to requests from school districts across the country, the USDA announced today that it will offer more choices to schools in the National School Lunch Program when it comes to purchases of ground beef products.*

*USDA only purchases products for the school lunch program that are safe, nutritious and affordable – including all products containing Lean Finely Textured Beef. However, due to customer demand, the department will be adjusting procurement specifications for the next school year so schools can have additional options in procuring ground beef products. USDA will provide schools with a choice to order product either with or without Lean Finely Textured Beef.*

*USDA continues to affirm the safety of Lean Finely Textured Beef product for all consumers and urges customers to consult science based information on the safety and quality of this product. Lean Finely Textured Beef is a meat product derived from a process which separates fatty pieces from beef trimmings to reduce the overall fat content.*

*By law, USDA has two primary responsibilities as part of its mandate to provide safe and nutritious food to the American people. Through the Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA ensures that safety of the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and processed egg products. Through the Food and Nutrition Service and the Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA provides food and nutrition assistance through several domestic programs, including the National School Lunch Program.*

*While USDA sets national nutritional guidelines for school meals, school districts make local decisions on what food to feed kids to meet these guidelines. On average, schools in the National School Lunch Program purchase approximately 20 percent of their food through USDA, and approximately 80 percent of food served is purchased directly by schools or school districts through private vendors. Schools purchase food from the department through the [USDA Foods Program](#), which provides more than 180 nutritious food items that are fresh, frozen, packaged, canned, dried, or in bulk. USDA procures these products based on the demand from schools to help meet the menu planning needs, student taste preferences, school nutrition goals, and local wellness initiatives.*

*USDA ensures all food purchased for the National School Lunch Program meet stringent food safety standards, which includes rigorous pathogen testing. Purchase specifications are continually*

*reviewed, microbial test results are evaluated, new food safety technologies are considered, and food safety experts are consulted to determine the adequacy of our food safety requirements.*

**From the Communicable Disease Control and Prevention Division of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, March 16, 2012**

*What has been called "pink slime" is actually referred to as Lean Finely Texture Beef by the USDA and meat industry and is regarded by the USDA as completely safe. The statement issued by the USDA does indicate that school lunch programs will have greater choices regarding these products in the future and schools may or may not elect to use this product.*

*The product has been in use for years and until recently has not received much attention. The current attention the product is getting is largely based on aesthetics- not safety concerns. DPHHS does not track the use of this product in the state and has no concerns regarding its safety.*

**The OPI School Nutrition Programs Food Distribution Plan for the 2012/13 School Year**

Beginning in school year 2012/13 only USDA Beef products that **do not** contain LFTB will be purchased for use in the Montana School Lunch Programs.